

tribución de aquellas escritoras románticas españolas al proyecto de la Modernidad.

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Jesús Pérez Magallón. *En torno a las ideas literarias de Mayans*. Alicante, Instituto de Cultura «Juan Gil-Albert», 1991, 290 pp.

Gregorio Mayans y Siscar was remarkable, in an age in which «Enlightenment» at times seemed synonymous with «France» and «England», for his impassioned determination to reform the teaching of rhetoric and the practice of writing through incorporation of Spanish classics into the canon. A figure of immense erudition and gravity who also could enter into heated disputes, Mayans was one of the great reformers of the literary Enlightenment in Spain. Jesús Pérez Magallón has provided an entertaining and thorough inquiry into Mayans' writings on rhetoric, history and literature. This review of Mayans' contribution to eighteenth-century literary culture undertakes both an analysis of Mayans' ideas about textual production and a revindication of their contemporary importance. Pérez Magallón creates a picture of eighteenth-century intellectual life that is imbued with enthusiasm for Mayans' project.

While Pérez Magallón is indebted to Mestre's work on Mayans, he provides the first study that attempts a broad contextualization of Mayans' intellectual production while undertaking an analysis of works that have not previously received attention within this context, such as the massive 2-volume *Rhetórica*. In doing so he presents the reader with a much-needed re-evaluation of «la obsesiva preocupación mayansiana por los problemas del lenguaje —oral y escrito—, y más específicamente aún por los problemas de la prosa en general» (102). In the course of this re-evaluation Pérez Magallón guides the reader through depiction of the enormously complicated contemporary intellectual climate, to arrive at an overall sense of the scope and importance of Mayans' work. The three sections of the book —Section I devoted to examination of the intellectual climate within which Mayans was working, Section II devoted to his ideas on rhetoric, poetics and aesthetics, and Section III devoted to his work as a historiographer, literary critic

and editor— follow the trajectory of Mayans' project to restore Spain's prominence in the great Republic of Letters, while at the same time offering analyses of individual works. The clear and well-organized presentation of information throughout the three sections permits readers new to Eighteenth Century studies to gain an overview of the main currents in contemporary aesthetics. At the same time the book does not disappoint those familiar with the field as it paints a detailed picture of the literary passions of both Mayans and his age.

Pérez Magallón is very concerned with revindication of the contemporary intellectual importance of Mayans, and in recounting Mayans' disputes with Feijoo or with Isla, he takes care to point out what he sees as weaknesses in the positions taken by Mayans' opponents. For example when relating Mayans' criticism of Feijoo's assertion that there are some who will never be eloquent, despite their studies of rhetoric (in Feijoo's «Elocuencia es naturaleza y no arte», Volume II of the *Cartas eruditas*), Pérez Magallón takes pains to dissect Feijoo's position and discover in it an element «ostensiblemente contradictorio de sus afirmaciones» (121), noting that «parece como si la misma inconstancia del benedictino para observar a través del microscopio le impidiera concentrarse detenidamente en una reflexión prolongada y coherente sobre algún tema» (121-22). The author's determination to defend Mayans lends an intimate flavor to the book which, rather than detracting from the text, serves to better illustrate how contentious many of these issues concerning rhetoric and language were in Mayans' and Feijoo's day.

Perhaps the most timely feature of this book is its focused examination of Mayans' ideas about literature and rhetoric. Pérez Magallón notes that in his analysis of the *Rhetórica* he intends to «poner de relieve algunos de los criterios que, siendo como son de estirpe clásica, cobran mayor importancia en su ideario dado el contexto en que se proclaman y los efectos que contribuyen a provocar» (141). Throughout the section treating the *Rhetórica*, the *Orador christiano* and Mayans' ideas on aesthetics, Pérez Magallón does indeed consistently place Mayans' central ideas in context, enabling the reader to gain a better understanding not only of Mayans' work in relation to classical and contemporary rhetorics, but also of the importance of rhetorical teaching to the overall project of the Enlightenment reformers, who realized (with Ma-

yans) that a nation that feels «admiración precisamente hacia lo oscuro e impenetrable» (87) will be unable to strive toward clarity and rationality.

Today's resurgence of interest in rhetorical studies is a fitting climate in which to reevaluate the contributions of Mayans. That Pérez Magallón has done so in a clear and engaging analysis can only serve to heighten interest in Mayans and remind readers of the excitement in store upon reading the texts of the Eighteenth Century.

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Javier Marías. *Pasiones pasadas*. Barcelona, Anagrama, 1991, 237 pp.

Siempre es una suerte poder contar con un libro de ensayos cuando el autor es, además, un novelista de éxito. Este es el caso de Javier Marías, considerado hoy uno de los novelistas más de moda en España.

Y es que por muy «intratextuales» que seamos, o por mucho que nos concentremos en un autor virtual, el novelista Javier Marías (autor «actual») es el mismo que se nos trasluce en las digresiones de *Pasiones pasadas*.

El libro se compone de una treintena de artículos, aparecidos en revistas y periódicos madrileños entre 1987 y 1990, de variada temática e interés. Cada uno de los artículos, según el autor, es «dependiente de la vehemencia o pasión de un instante» (10). Pero esta variedad entrará, como veremos, tanto al plano de lo irregular como al del puro y simple desorden.

La irregularidad se explica, hasta cierto punto, por la estructura misma del libro, que presenta juntos ensayos de un nivel discursivo muy heterogéneo. Así, tenemos ensayos de tipo argumental, desde la anécdota al casi-manifiesto, en los que el ingenio juega un papel central, junto a otros de tipo más meditativo, de lo sentimental a lo filosófico.

Entre los argumentales destacan los del comienzo de la obra, dedicados a barrios y ciudades (Venecia, Barcelona, Oxford, etc.). En ellos, Marías muestra un ingenio de buena marca, por ejemplo en sus teorías sobre las dos clases de ciudades que mejor conoce: las «jactanciosas» (Madrid, Roma) y las «presumidas» (Barcelona,